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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
29 June 1953

In a letter dated 15 June 1953 the Continental Defense Committee, pursuant to its terms of reference as established by the National Security Council, requested a briefing by CIA on the Intelligence Program and an evaluation of the current intelligence effort as it related to the problem of warning of surprise attack against the continental United States. OCI was requested by the DD/I to prepare a briefing, which was prepared with assistance from OSI on appropriate sections and then submitted to the IAC agencies for their substantive comments or approval at the 23 June IAC meeting. At that meeting, two minor suggestions were incorporated and the approved briefing was presented to the Committee by the Deputy Director, CIA, on 24 June 1953.

It is important to note, as is clearly stated in the introduction, that this briefing does not attempt to analyze Soviet capabilities to attack, but only the question of warning. The Committee will receive additional briefings on the problem of Soviet capabilities for an attack and the estimated probability that they will choose one or more of the possible courses of action open to them.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
24 June 1953

BRIEFING FOR CONTINENTAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

1. In your letter it was stated that the Continental Defense Committee has been advised "there can be no guarantee now that Intelligence will give advance warning of a surprise attack, even a major one." I want to analyze this statement from the standpoint first of putting it into context and, second, utilizing it as the point of departure for purposes of this presentation. The presentation will not attempt to analyze Soviet capabilities to attack, but only the question of warning.

2. Atomic attack against the continental United States without advance warning is conceded to be within Soviet capabilities. It can be assumed, therefore, that a Soviet decision to launch an atomic air attack against the US could be implemented and the security screen behind which they operate could deny us any warning beyond that which our early-warning radar and forward observation stations would provide. If a Soviet decision to utilize this capability is predicated on a course of action involving the near simultaneous movement of the Red Army against Western Europe or an amphibious attack against US-controlled or Allied forward installations, [REDACTED]

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On the other hand, preparations for an assault by Soviet forces from the Transcaucasus area would afford little if any advance warning. The problem of advance warning could thus be broader than that posed by direct air attack on the United States alone.

3. Although there can be no guarantee of advance warning, even in the case of Soviet initiation of general hostilities, we believe that certain final preparations would still have to be made, despite the advanced states of readiness of the Soviet armed forces in some areas. Soviet forces in East Germany, for example, are dispersed throughout the zone during the summer maneuver season, with artillery elements training in one area, infantry in other areas, and engineers conducting river-crossing exercises elsewhere. It would be necessary to bring at least all these divisional components together in order to launch an offensive with complete divisional formations, except during the maneuver period (usually late August and September). In addition, the units are at present somewhat understrength in a peacetime organization and we expect that they would be expanded to full wartime T/O before an attack. This we would be able to detect under present circumstances. However, the continuing development of Soviet and Satellite capabilities will make it increasingly difficult to recognize last-minute preparations and to discriminate between them and efforts to perfect their capabilities.

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4. The accepted view of the US [REDACTED] intelligence 25X1C
community is that at this time, "The USSR continues to improve
its military capabilities, but there are no indications that
the Soviet Union is preparing to initiate hostilities with its
own forces in the immediate future." This view does not
exclude the possibility that an atomic attack could be launched
with little or no warning.

THE PROBLEM IN RELATION TO SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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[REDACTED] Thus, we must base our warning system on the
identification of implementing measures following a Soviet
decision to launch an attack. In theory the identification
of implementing measures should be of such a positive nature
as to constitute indubitable signs of a clear and immediate
danger and thereby lead without dissension to the right and
necessary actions in self defense. In practice we cannot
now provide such unmistakable clarity.

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[REDACTED] The denial of information on a national scale,

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or rather on a continental scale, requires the most exhaustive planning and the most fanatic exercise of security precautions.

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7. Implementing measures which we might detect could be the movement of long-range bomber units to those forward bases better situated for an attack against the US, such as the Murmansk area and the Chukotsk Peninsula; stationing at these bases of fighter escort units and advance echelons of long-range bomber units; concentration at these bases of aerial tankers, maintenance equipment, fuel, etc.; sudden increase in activity at forward airfields, followed by sudden cessation of activity in a maintenance stand-down. Preparations for use of guided missiles might be detected through stockpiling of rockets in forward areas, appearance at launching sites of special vehicles for transporting missiles and fuels or the movement of such vehicles to forward areas from the interior.

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8. The sources of information now available fall into several major categories; unclassified material, US officials stationed abroad, information gathered by technical means, interrogations, and covert and counterintelligence at home and abroad. All are valuable, but they all have serious weaknesses.

9. Unclassified material. This category includes the Communist press and radio, statements by Communist leaders, Communist publications, including Soviet technical and scientific journals, and a welter of published information from a wide variety of sources and experiences.

10. Although this category contains information of immense value with respect to determining enemy capabilities, it contains little reliable information with respect to Soviet intentions. Enemy propaganda, to cite an example, is a sensitive instrument, and by careful quantitative and qualitative analysis it is possible to detect quite delicate shifts in emphasis. But the shifts in emphasis thus detected in propaganda are not definitive indications of intent to act. Soviet technical publications do yield considerable information on scientific and technical intentions as well as capabilities, but of an extremely long-range nature.

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11. Newspapermen and Western visitors to Communist countries are the least valuable overt sources. These people are either carefully selected by the Communists for their political leanings or their movements are carefully restricted. They rarely, and then only by accident, become aware of useful information.)

12. Unclassified material provides us with tons of raw material and requires the services of hundreds of personnel for its exploitation. It is one of the essential but rather backbreaking tasks in the intelligence game.

13. US Government Reports. Into this category fall the searchings of US officials and the mass of reports which they send back from Orbit countries. However, State Department officials and Army, Navy and Air attaches are severely limited in their movements in Orbit countries. They are, however, trained observers who have a specific intelligence mission. Documents and photographs, as well as information, can be sent home free from Orbit censorship. Only by accident will a Western official in the Orbit be permitted to see any signs of preparations for war. He may, however, be able to verify or refute covert reports of warlike activity. If a report comes in of military concentrations at X, he can try to go to X. If he gets there and finds no such concentration, the report can be dismissed. If he finds that X has just been

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placed off limits to Westerners, he can warn to that effect. It must be borne in mind, however, that our service attaches abroad could be deliberately misled by cleverly arranged exposure to situations not reflecting the true state of affairs.

14. Military attaches in the USSR have been able to identify new types of weapons. Those in the Satellites have in addition provided considerable call-up, order-of-battle, state of training, and maneuver information.

15. State cables give a continuing reading of the diplomatic climate. This is pertinent to the warning process, but usually lacking in the precision requisite for indications of intent. An Embassy or Legation can detect a state of tension in public morale, and probably the impact of sweeping measures affecting a large part of the population in the Capital in which it is located. Should preparations for war begin, it is likely that the information available from these sources would be reduced because of greatly increased security precautions directed against Western personnel.

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This field appears in general to offer some possibility for the future in developing additional useful information. This is true in the areas of both advance and early warning.

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18. Interrogations. Defectors and returnees can be reliable sources of information, but their information suffers from a considerable time lag, which limits its usefulness for advance warning. Information from German scientists returning from work in the USSR is usually at least six months old by the time it reaches us, and in most cases these people were removed from "sensitive" projects long before they left the USSR. This material is extremely valuable, however, in determining the status of those technical developments which the Soviet Union took over from the Germans.

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WHAT WE DO WITH IT: THE CURRENT PROGRAM

22. Within the US intelligence community, our best talents are being applied to resolving the problem of timely warning of

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impending enemy attack. The imposition of strict security by the USSR makes it clear that intelligence analysis of Soviet intentions must be based on a study of many fragments of information, in the absence of high-level, firsthand reports. We have made every effort to draw up a series of "indicators" of Soviet intentions to initiate hostilities. A check-list of possible indicators is kept current to encompass information concerning preparations in all fields of Soviet activity such as internal security, political, economic, military and technical development; the list covers specific, short-term indicators like the issuance of field rations to troops, as well as very long-term indicators such as uranium ore prospecting.

23. In November 1950, a Watch Committee was established by the IAC, including representatives of CIA, State, the three Services, AEC and FBI, and is charged with "providing timely warning of Soviet or Soviet-Satellite military action hostile to the interests of the United States"(IAC-D-6, 28 November 1950). As now constituted, the committee meets weekly, and emergency meetings are called by the chairman whenever he or any member of the committee considers an interim meeting to be justified by the receipt of incoming information. Several such meetings have been convened on short notice since the committee was formed. At each regular meeting the committee analyzes and evaluates the possible indicators which have been gleaned by US intelligence

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during the preceding week. A written report of conclusions, concurred in by the member agencies, is distributed to the Director, Central Intelligence and to the heads of the other IAC agencies. Each Watch Committee member is responsible for bringing to the meetings information on the indicators falling within his agency's field of responsibility. It is specifically provided that each Watch Committee member shall have ready access to the highest level of intelligence in his agency.

24. The Watch Committee is not intended as the mechanism for warning of a Soviet bomber attack on the United States once the bombers have taken off. Under those circumstances, the problem becomes one of early warning as opposed to advance warning and the primary need is for rapid communications to transmit the discovery of their flight to the officials responsible for continental defense of the US.

25. Watch Committees similar to that of the IAC in Washington have also been established in two critical areas in the field, [REDACTED]. Both these groups deal 25X1A with indications of hostile preparations only as they apply to their own geographical areas of responsibility.

26. The operations reviewed above all have the same general purpose and method: to provide current analysis of all available information which might reveal enemy preparations to launch a major attack. It is important to remember that

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the system of presentation is only a tool and that a list of indicators cannot be expected to operate like a pin-ball machine, lighting up when a certain degree of danger has been reached. In the final analysis, the success of any indications operation will depend on the ability of its personnel to weigh the significance and portent of a mass of fragmentary data in a background of thorough knowledge of enemy capabilities and a broad understanding of general world trends.

OUR PRESENT CAPABILITY

27. This discussion is based on the assumption that at the hypothetical time of attack, US Intelligence is receiving intelligence information substantially similar in quality, quantity and timeliness to that which it now receives. This continuing availability of information is not assured. We face the prospect of progressive closing out of our resources in advance areas [REDACTED] This necessitates 25X1A greater dependence upon technical means for detecting enemy activity [REDACTED] 25X1D

28. The nature and degree of adequacy of the intelligence concerning Soviet and Satellite military activities is not uniform for all areas. It may, therefore, be useful to consider separately the various geographic areas from which the USSR could launch air attacks. It may be well to note at this point that I am not going to discuss the areas from the standpoint of launching ground attacks.

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29. Poland - Czechoslovakia - Germany. Air attacks against the US, staged from bases in this area, would necessitate forward displacement of long-range bomber units since there are no such units there at present. Detection of the arrival of such units would, therefore, provide some advance warning if it can be properly diagnosed. Such units could be moved in and become permanently based there, thus increasing the difficulty in diagnosing such indications and reducing our chances of detection of an attack to indications of the last stage of preparations before actual take-off.

30. Attack on the US Launched from the Polar Regions.

An atomic air attack over the Pole against targets in the US might be launched from bases in the Murmansk, Northern Siberia or Chukotsk areas. [REDACTED]

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31. In general, warning indicators include increased supply and military and transport aircraft movements to the area. Significant military redispersions, particularly of air units, would have to take place before maximum readiness could be achieved. Once these redispersions had been accomplished we would again be dependent largely upon early-warning facilities.

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33. Air Attack with Near Simultaneous Ground Attack.
On the assumption that an air attack against the United States involves near simultaneous launching of an offensive by Soviet ground forces, the warning problem would be somewhat different.

34. The direct and immediate implications of a Soviet offensive against Western Europe have resulted in a great

concentration of effort by all major Western intelligence services on Soviet and Satellite capabilities in this area. As a result, indications of Soviet or Satellite preparations for attack in this area are likely to appear four to six weeks in advance of final readiness.

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man plans and allocations are likely to be involved and dis-located by any significant preparations for a Soviet attack on Western Europe, even though few additional Soviet troops or supplies may need to enter East Germany until after the attack has begun.

35. Soviet forces will carry the brunt of the effort; no cat's-paw force, as in North Korea, will be adequate. In the Balkan Satellites, Communist military capabilities will progressively increase to levels believed to be necessary for a major assault on the West, complicating the detection of any necessary last-minute preparations. This will be particularly true if Soviet forces in East Germany are on advanced maneuvers, as is the usual practice in August and September of each year.

36. Information on the movement and concentration of Soviet forces in East Germany is likely to provide last-minute indications. Agent reports may reflect certain

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specialized and unusual preparations in the Soviet zone before the point of readiness is reached.

37. Should an air attack against the United States be coordinated with a ground offensive launched from the Transcaucasus area we can expect very little if any advance indications. The combination of air attack on the US with ground operations in other areas adjacent to the USSR would afford us possibilities for advance indications falling between the four to six weeks advance appearance of indications in East Germany to possibly no advance indications in the Transcaucasus.

38. Clandestine Attack. The USSR is capable of employing a variety of means for surprise clandestine delivery of atomic weapons to targets in the continental US. (All these means have been studied by US Intelligence and are discussed in detail in NIE-31.)

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[REDACTED] With the exception of the employment of TU-4's disguised with US markings, advance indications of the clandestine delivery of atomic weapons will depend in part on our internal security forces.

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39. Guided Missiles. With respect to the capability of the USSR to employ guided missiles of the V-1 type launched from submarines or merchant vessels, advance warning from early detection of the submarines and merchant vessels will depend entirely [REDACTED] against 25X1C submarines our present capability is probably marginal, at best, but should improve with anticipated improvements in our antisubmarine warfare capabilities, particularly with the introduction [REDACTED] Detection of merchant 25X1D vessels is a considerably easier problem, but unmistakable identification of their hostile intent is quite different.

40. Advance warning of intercontinental missiles would require [REDACTED] 25X1C

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[REDACTED] Over the next several years, the USSR probably will be capable of employing missiles or parasites launched from bomber aircraft. Advance warning of these will be dependent upon the capabilities of our early-warning network.

SUMMARY

41. In summary, I wish to repeat that the Soviet Union has the capabilities for launching an atomic air attack against the United States. The security screen behind which they operate could deny us any warning beyond that which our

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early-warning radar and forward observation stations would furnish concerning the bombers in flight from take-off to the target.

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At the present, therefore, we probably are dependent for our warning on the identification of Soviet measures for implementing a decision to launch an attack. To this end we are attempting to exploit all available sources of information and constantly striving to develop new and improved means. Technical sources, appear to be our best hope for the future. Until we develop new means, or substantially improve those we now use for acquiring intelligence on the USSR, our problem of advance warning will remain one of sifting out of literally tons of material those indications of enemy activity which suggest measures for implementing a decision to attack.

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